



NEWS RELEASE

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DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS LAUNCHES NEW AWARENESS INITIATIVE TO HELP CONSUMERS STRUGGLING WITH BAD ECONOMY

"Take Charge, California!" Urges Californians to Be Smart, Be Safe, Be Heard

(SACRAMENTO) - Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger this week issued a proclamation declaring March 1-7, 2009 as part of "California Consumer Protection Week" and the California Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) is heeding his call. On March 3, DCA gathered government officials, consumer advocates and community partners at the California Department of Consumer Affairs' Consumer Information Center to launch a new consumer-awareness initiative called "Take Charge, California!" A Southern California kick-off event was held today in Los Angeles at the Evans Consumer Information Fair.

The initiative urges consumers to "Be Smart, Be Safe and Be Heard," and is intended to empower consumers by providing easy access to the information and resources needed to make smart choices when shopping or securing the services of a professional or tradesperson during this economic downturn.

"Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has led the way in making California a model in consumer protection by promoting policies and initiatives that set us apart from others," said State and Consumer Services Secretary Rosario Marin. "It is very fitting that we launched this initiative from DCA's Consumer Information Center because this call center represents the frontline when it comes to helping and empowering consumers."

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“The department’s consumer awareness campaign comes at a time when consumers need economic relief and we want to help them navigate through the maze of programs and complaint processes,” said DCA Director Carrie Lopez. “Tough economic times are times of increased criminal activity. Being smart and informed are the best defenses against scams. We want to make sure consumers have the information they need to make good decisions.”

“This campaign couldn’t come at a better time,” said Pastor Herrera, Jr., Director of the Los Angeles County Department of Consumer Affairs, which organized the Evans Consumer Information Fair. “As the economy continues to squeeze family resources, the information this campaign will provide could make a huge difference for consumers and help them weather this recession.”

“The old adage that ‘knowledge is power’ really is true for consumers,” said Barry Goggin, president of the Better Business Bureau of Northeast California. “Consumers who know how to ‘Take Charge’ are much better able to protect themselves. That’s important in good economic times, and even more important in difficult times like we’re in now.”

“Take Charge, California!” encompasses community outreach, strategic partnerships with government and community organizations, and publications in several languages. A centerpiece of the initiative is a new website, www.takechargeca.ca.gov, which provides one-stop service to consumers who are searching for tips on how to get the most for their money in the marketplace, alerts on the latest consumer scams and frauds, easy license look-up to ensure they are dealing with licensed professionals, and information about where and how to complain if they are dissatisfied with a product or service.

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“We are committed to a more consumer-centric approach to making information available,” said DCA Director Lopez. “Take Charge, California!” helps us meet that commitment and, more importantly, will help us empower consumers to survive and thrive in the marketplace.”

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- Read the Governor’s proclamation [here](http://gov.ca.gov/proclamation/11549/) (link to: <http://gov.ca.gov/proclamation/11549/>)
- DCA will be involved in a number of activities during National Consumer Protection Week. Check them out [here](http://www.dca.ca.gov/consumer/outreach/calendar_special_events.pdf). (Link to: www.dca.ca.gov/consumer/outreach/calendar_special_events.pdf.)